



FEMA

STRENGTHENING DISASTER RECOVERY FOR THE NATION



Strengthening Disaster Recovery for the Nation

VIDEO TELECONFERENCE (VTC)

Region II

Time: October 29, 2009, Thursday, 1:00 PM – 4:00 PM (Eastern)

Participating Locations: FEMA Region II, New York,
New Jersey, Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands

Participation Via:

**VTCs, phone bridge (only) and participating through
WebEx**

Sectors Represented:

**Federal and State agencies, nonprofits and private
sector and Tribal representation**

**Note: This product is provided as a general summary only, not a transcript of
the discussion.**

Region II VTC Summary

New York City, New York
October 29, 2009

Region II participants addressed questions 1 and 4 as a group. Question 16 responses were directed to the Web site. The remaining questions were handled in Breakout Groups ensuring smaller group discussion and encouraging 100 percent participation in the process. Each VTC location was a Breakout Group. Region II comments follow.

PARTICIPANT COMMENTS

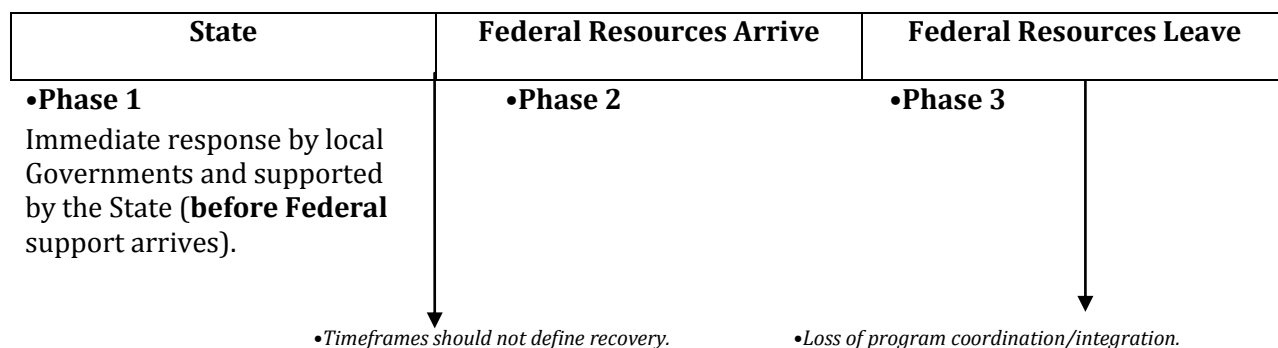
NOTE: Responses are by questions posed and are noted using the original sequencing.

Q1: (Group Question) How would you define a successful disaster recovery?

- Region II VTC participants observed that:
 - Successful recoveries **identify, prioritize** and **provide** for needs across **all** populations. Resources are located and delivered to people needing them.
 - One participant said that success has to be considered on several dimensions: **Community, psychological, infrastructure, economic/financial** and **government**. Metrics need to be established for each and then tracked during recovery. Success is defined by recovery achievements across each dimension.
 - Recovery success is seen when, to the “fullest extent possible,” the community **returns** to a state of “**normalcy**” or **pre-disaster conditions**; **infrastructure** is “back in place,” the “community is **back at work** and **functioning**.”
 - Successful recoveries require:
 - Effective **planning** and **use plans as “check off” tools** against which recovery progress is measured.
 - Robust after actions to identify **Lessons Learned**.
 - **Identification, coordination, integration** and **delivery of resources** at all levels — Federal, State, private, nonprofit and volunteer.
 - Successful recoveries **identify tools** needed for the community to go forward and ways to **incentivize** local communities to have sound disaster plans in place so they know what they need to return to “normalcy.”

Q2: (Breakout Question) Are there clear phases in the disaster recovery process that are useful milestones?

- Breakout Group participants identified recovery milestones based on the Federal role in recovery.



- Participants observed that:
 - FEMA focus is typically based on timeframes. However, participants feel that **timeframes should not define recovery**, especially long-term recovery.
 - When Federal support leaves, **coordination of individual programs is lost**, programs “splinter” or become “stove piped.”

Q3: (Breakout Question) What features of Federal disaster recovery assistance are most important to you?

- Participants in the Breakout Group identified features and grouped them by recovery needs that when addressed, make successful recoveries more likely:
 - Resources.**
 - Coordination.**
 - Operational infrastructure.**
 - Authorities.**
- Participants identified important features in two (2) ways: Those **existing** and **new ones needed**:

RECOVERY NEEDS	EXISTING AND NEWLY IDENTIFIED FEATURES of FEDERAL DISASTER RECOVERY IDENTIFIED AS MOST IMPORTANT
RESOURCES	<p>Existing Features of Federal Support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assistance to those in public housing. • Ensuring that the disabled are assisted and accommodated. • Getting loans and financial assistance to businesses. • Assistance with restoration of critical infrastructure. • Availability of tax relief. <p>Newly Identified Features Needed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure recovery stakeholders, governing authorities and citizens understand: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What resources are available. ○ From whom. ○ How to access available resources. ○ When applications can be made and deadlines for when application periods close. • Simplified application processes. • Increase outreach to communities and governing authorities on what recovery resources are available. • The availability of tax relief was noted as an important example of a resource that is not universally known. • Early briefings for applicants on State and Federal program and funding sources.
COORDINATION	<p>Newly Identified Features Needed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearly identified strategies for how each agency can work together.
OPERATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE	<p>Newly Identified Features Needed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarification of recovery roles and authorities at the Federal level. • Transition assistance from one role to another. • Recovery workers are properly trained and protected.
AUTHORITIES	<p>Newly Identified Features Needed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regulatory barriers identified and addressed. • Stafford Act expansion so that non-typical disasters can be addressed, funding can be secured and transitioning between agencies is seamless. (The example given was an infectious disease or biological event.) • HUD and other recovery resource providers need “elasticize” rules and processes so they have more flexibility; can be more sensitive to timeliness in applying for and providing resources especially when addressing longer-term recovery needs; and to expedite funding. FHA funding was noted by participants as an example. • Appropriate policies and procedures are in place so that those in assisted housing are assisted as quickly as possible to ensure that Katrina-type problems do not occur.

Q4: (Group Question) How would you measure progress and what specific metrics should be considered for a successful disaster recovery?

- Region II participants addressed this question by:
 - First focusing on measuring recovery *efforts* by identifying **types of activities** that if measured, are helpful in determining if recoveries are successful; and then
 - **Defining** an appropriate **metric**.

TYPES OF ACTIVITIES TO MEASURE + METRIC

- Region II participants noted that resources and support needed **for catastrophic recoveries** are likely different than those needed for “garden-type” disasters smaller in scope.
- Participants expressed that measurable feedback must be **transparent**.
- **Types of activities** Region II participants said the following provides helpful information when determining recovery success. Where articulated, a suggested metric is noted.
 - Federal and State agencies and program areas should consider **how well they’ve responded to specific citizen needs**. Questions participants think should be considered include:
 - *Have we defined **clear objectives**?*
 - *Have **short- and long-term housing** been provided?*
 - *Have **businesses** been allowed to return?*
 - *Is **infrastructure** back in place?*
 - Recovery leadership should consider developing, clearly articulating and “sticking to” specific **timelines**. Timelines:
 - Provide opportunities for **evaluating** and **measuring** recovery progress.
 - Help **manage expectations** from and of Federal, State and local partners.
 - Ensure **transparency** in the recovery process.
 - Using HUD as an example, participants noted that it is **difficult for someone who is remote to accurately assess disaster impacts** and **define recovery priorities**. They feel **local authorities need to determine** how Federal and State authorities (at their respective levels) need to respond and get resources in place.

Planning activities can provide a framework and needed direction for recovery. Participants think recovery leadership should consider the importance of pre-disaster **planning processes especially noting planning for temporary housing** to ensure housing is in place post-disaster.

Participants feel community-planning efforts need to be **integrated** and consolidated plans need to show how HUD resources are used. **Disaster funding** should be included in consolidated plans.

Participants think **incentives** are needed to encourage local planning efforts.

- **Other comments offered:**
 - It is important that long-term community recovery has **community buy-in**.
 - **Size and scope** of events will determine, in part, what the community’s future will look like.
- Participants discussed:
 - The concept of a “**new**” **post-disaster normal**.
 - The importance of local communities **defining** what the “new normal” post-disaster will be.
 - **Communications** strategies between local citizens and community leadership noting that they need to include building awareness and understanding of the “new normal.”
- Participants **questioned** how recovery progress can be evaluated against the “new normal.”

Q5: (Breakout Question) What are best practices in managing recovery from disasters?

- Breakout Group participants began by first acknowledging:
 - **All disasters are local** — “They start local and end local. . .” — and there are **no “quick fixes.”**
 - **States** need to “run” recovery.
 - The **power of the State** is authorized by the *Stafford Act*.
- Participants feel best practices in recovery management need to:
 - Identify **recovery goals** and **expectations**. Participants feel it is important that goals are realistic and address re-establishing day-to-day life in the community.
 - Ensure **citizens** and **local government officials** are engaged in the recovery process.
 - Include **local stakeholders, faith-based communities, nonprofits** and the **private sectors**.
 - **Maximize** not minimize Federal recovery assistance and laws, rules and policies should **not restrict assistance**.

Q6: (Breakout Question) What are the appropriate State, local and Tribal roles in leading disaster recovery efforts?

- Overall participants feel **vision** and **planning at the outset** and at all levels of authorities are critical to successful recoveries.
- Participants noted that **limited planning capability** in affected areas needs to be identified and addressed and that the pre-disaster identification of **critical facilities** that could be affected by a disaster is important to effective response and expedited recoveries.
- Participants also feel that State and local authorities have a **coordination role**.
- This group felt that recovery could be defined as returning the community to its **pre-disaster state**.

Q7: (Breakout Question) How can the nonprofit and private sectors be better integrated into recovery?

- Breakout Group participants expressed that better integration of nonprofits and the private sector into recovery:
 - Begins when **appropriate expectations** are defined across recovery partners and organizations with recovery resources. Setting appropriate expectations is done in part through clearly defined **roles** and **relationships** between State and Federal recovery partners and other stakeholder groups.
 - Benefits from **strong relationships** established between Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters (VOADs) and business groups and that they are involved in planning, training and exercising, resulting in a better understanding of how all the moving parts of recovery fit together.

- Is facilitated when **organizational structures** are clear, **organizational strengths** are predefined, and **training** and **exercising** occur pre-disaster. Participants noted that **training and exercising pre-disaster helps identify strengths**. They feel it is also important to “**cementing**” strong relationships and can result in greater efficiencies in recovery efforts post-disaster.
- Participants want to see:
 - **One voice, one POC** to ensure clarity of communications.
 - Assigned staff having clear **understandings of partners** and **the roles of partners** in recovery.
 - A **lead VOAD** or **business group** identified.
 - **Special interests** and **special interest groups** identified.
 - **Needs** identified.
 - The **strength of responding partners** analyzed.
 - Needs identification and strength assessments of partners need to be **re-visited** “from-time-to time” to ensure appropriateness, ongoing accuracy of evaluations and strategies are in place to change as needs change.
 - Greater inclusion of **human services** and **private sector** activities in existing exercises.
- Participants noted **capacity is often diminished** as a result of a disaster. The existence of **back-up plans** and **contingency** planning is important and can help fill the capacity gap.
- Participants also expressed that there needs to be **greater inclusion of human WP services** and **private sector** in training events, acknowledging that the **private sector is sometimes under represented**.
- One participant suggested establishing **(pre-) agreements to manage different portions of response and recovery** before a disaster strikes. The example noted, was the development of a pre-disaster agreement with an appropriate organization to manage donations.

Q8: (Breakout Question) What are best practices for community recovery planning that incorporates public input?

- Breakout Group participants expressed that **early engagement with key community leaders** helps develop relationships needed for recovery success. Participants noted especially the need to integrate **faith-based groups, nonprofits** and **private** sector organizations and stakeholders in the process.
- They also noted that identification and establishment of a **local recovery group** aids the community recovery process as does identifying **long-term leadership** to follow-up on recovery projects and work.
- Establishing **recovery goals early** and the **early identification of recovery resources** that are available in an affected area is important to **asset identification** and **management**. Participants suggested that recovery resources can be found in **preplanned projects, other projects** in which the community may be involved and newly identified **projects that are disaster-specific** and needed for recovery.
- Identifying critical facilities was again mentioned as an important step in preparing for a disaster. Examples given included **hospitals, correctional facilities** and **power plants**.

Participants feel pre-disaster identification of critical facilities can expedite post-disaster recoveries.

Q9: (Breakout Question) How can Federal, State and local disaster planning and recovery processes and programs be best coordinated?

- Breakout Group participants feel it is important:
 - To respect that **recovery starts before an incident**.
 - State and local partners are **engaged** and are “allowed to approach the mike.”
 - **Interagency coordination groups are formed**, are delegate-robust, include senior level command and can direct Federal and State recovery resources.
- Participants comments were from several perspectives:
 - Office of Homeland Security
 - Local government
 - Survivors assistance
 - Tribal
 - State public assistance
 - Operational
 - Public utilities

For example:

PERSPECTIVE	PLANNING + PROCESS + PROGRAMS COORDINATION
Office of Homeland Security	Said: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Success can only be achieved if ALL of the Federal family is at the planning table.
Local government	Would like to see: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Coordination efforts include the creation of a faith-based database identifying leaders to bridge faith-based leadership with Office of Emergency Management (OEM) leadership. Bridging the “divide” can energize and inform and sets up an environment where resources can be mobilize efficiently as needed.• Creation of a workforce investment board of which OEMs are a part.• VOADs connectivity with OEMs.• VOADs having NIMS training. The National Incident Management System (NIMS) system facilitates clearly articulated roles and responsibilities, identifies appropriate chain-of-command and encourages information exchange.
Survivors assistance	Would like to see: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Leadership encourage planning from the ground up.

Tribal representation	Wants: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities for State and Tribal authorities to plan together.
State Public Assistance	Expressed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater outreach and public education efforts are needed. Communities needing recovery resources need to know how PA dollars are allocated, for example. • Training and exercising pre-disaster on Public Assistance forms and applications so users know when due, what to include, restrictions (if any), timelines for applying and milestones, and what next steps are, can and will speed up the delivery of recovery resources.
Operational	From the operational perspective: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-disaster creation of a joint inter-agency group to coordinate Federal and State recovery resources can expedite recovery decision-making as well as the delivery of resources.
Public utilities	Priority focus for public utilities are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To restore basic services and to provide mutual aid to communities needing assistance. • Exercise mutual aid.

Additionally:

- Participants noted that the Federal government has invested a lot of resources in catastrophic planning. Participants want **Federal agencies to be a part of recovery planning**. For example, Dept of Housing and Urban Development, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers — all Federal partners — need to be “at the table.”
- One state noted its progress towards **recovery planning**.
- Participants feel **State agency leadership** is needed for the recovery planning effort and the plan should be created from the “**ground up**.”
- Participants would like to see **earlier (prior to Disaster Declaration) pre-disaster outreach** to likely applicants for recovery resources post-disaster. Outreach would include State Public Asset Officer conducting regularly scheduled workshops. **Workshops** would focus on how recovery funds are accessed and allocated and include timelines that identify application milestones.
- Participants noted that the Tribal communities would like to collaborate in their state and at other levels.

Q10: (Breakout Question) As disaster recovery is primarily a State and local leadership issue, what are best practices for the timing (including start and end) and form of Federal assistance and coordination?

- Some participants in Breakout Groups that addressed question 10 began their discussion by noting:
 - Recovery coordination is a **State and local initiative** under “normal” circumstances.
 - Recovery coordination is a **ground-up process**, not just Federally led.
 - **Response and recovery begin at the same time.**
 - States must **request** Federal assistance; it does not happen automatically.
 - State and Federal resources should be prepared to provide **Technical Assistance** so that communities are prepared when programs are activated and/or to activate programs.
 - *National Response Framework (NRF)* **addresses recoveries**; perhaps we should rely on it more for guidance.
 - Federal partners working with local and State authorities during the **preparedness** phase are important to creating a post-disaster environment that supports recovery.
- Participants feel **recovery needs greater State, Federal and local integration.**
- They also expressed that **recovery ends** when local, State and Federal recovery goals are met. **Questions they believe need to be addressed include:** *What are recovery goals? What are we trying to do? How do local, State and Federal partners define recovery?*
- Participants noted that recovery resources are found within **and limited by** the *Stafford Act*. Others think knowing the availability of **planning assistance, recovery resources**, including **loans** and **mitigation funding opportunities**, is important to successful recoveries.
- Participants said that during the **preparedness phase, pre-disaster training is essential** and that discussions need to **identify**:
 - **Likely recovery partners** should a disaster occur.
 - **What** recovery partners can provide.
 - **Program updates** when needed.
- Comments continued by examining the **Disaster Declaration process**. Participants expressed that:
 - **Timing** is critical to recovery success. The example noted was *Disaster Declarations* that occur six (6) weeks after the disaster. Some participants feel that is too late — too many important decisions have already been made. One participant said it this way, “*We need to get on the same page so that folks get the help they need. . .*” and so we can **expedite** resources to those who need them.
 - That **coordination from the beginning** is important when developing *Disaster Declarations*. Communities and States need to **speak with one voice** and everyone needs to be in agreement on what the package will contain.
 - State and local leadership need better understandings **earlier on** of the *Declaration process* so they can:
 - More clearly explain and **define deliverables.**
 - Communicate to constituents “**step-by-step**” **processes and sequencing** as recovery progresses from beginning to end.
 - Which Federal agencies provide what resources.

- When considering timing further, participants were insistent that **recovery planning needs to begin NOW**. Implementation can start TODAY. Efforts need to include:
 - An increase in **cross-program integration**.
 - An increase in **State, local and Federal integration**.
 - All recovery partners and stakeholders **“at the table.”**
 - An understanding of **grant availability** in preparedness and recovery phases and for mitigation initiatives.
 - **Integration of preparedness planning in recovery and mitigation planning.**
- One participant **did not agree that disaster recovery is primarily a State and local leadership responsibility**. This participant noted that **Federal resources bring 70 percent of funding** to the table. This participant's view was recovery is a shared responsibility:
 - **State and locals provide leadership** and identify recovery needs.
 - **Federals provide tools and toolbox.**
 - State and locals need to understand **“what’s coming** (in terms of available resources)” as well as the toolbox.
 - Federal partners have a responsibility to **increase State and local awareness** of available resources.
- This participant went on to note that State and locals are handicapped because they sometimes don’t know **what resources are available** or how to access them. Federal agencies with recovery resources need to be able to articulate **what they are able to provide and to whom**. Often funding can go to a specific local agency but cannot be moved or “exchanged” to another.
- Conversely, Federal partner representatives said that State and local leadership needs to be prepared to provide Federal recovery partners with a **list of needs and local resources** that can be applied to those needs.
- Participants noted that ongoing **training is needed**, asking the questions: *Do we (Federal family) provide enough time focusing on awareness building of available recovery programs and assets? Do we provide enough information and training on all aspects of recovery?*
- Participants expressed that staffing changes and program changes require additional training. One participant suggested that program training should occur once or twice a year.
- Another participant suggested that “We need to **get together frequently**. . . and talk about what has changed from a programming perspective and from a recovery in progress perspective. . .” and address those changes. **Participants want “direct connects”** between local, State and Federal authorities and recovery partners examined frequently including regular reconfirmation of POCs.
- Participants also identified **challenges** to providing assistance and coordination:
 - **Pre-declaration uncertainty** makes it difficult to get resources into the field quickly.
 - Communities sometimes need funding assistance to complete the *Declaration* request. Without resources to develop the request, help is delayed.
 - Participants emphasized local government relationships with Federal agencies as a resource to help address gaps services and support.
 - One participant noted that **workforce shortages** and **attrition** affect the State’s ability to coordinate recovery.

- **Changes in POCs** also present challenges for the continuous flow of information. Context may be lost when staffing changes are made.
- **State staffing** is usually shared and stretched “pretty thin” during a disaster. Employees are deployed from their “day jobs” to take on new disaster-related response and recovery tasks.
- Participants identified other **best practices** they would like to see:
 - Because participants feel Technical Assistance is important to effective recoveries, they want to see **Technical Assistance** provided **pre-disaster** to help with recovery planning and plan execution.
 - Develop State, local and Federal **recovery partnerships** needed post-disaster, established pre-disaster. Partnerships should be **pro-active** and included staff experienced in program activation.
 - **Increased capacity** development and self-sufficiency in **remote areas**. Help can be a “phone call away” but actually getting resources to remote areas can be a challenge.
 - The creation and maintenance of a database to **inventory available resources**.
 - **Joint exercising** and **training** to aid planning efforts, increase program knowledge, identify gaps, enhance relationships and “add a ‘face on the voice’” (usually heard but not seen on conference calls).
 - Sustainability of long-term recovery efforts. Participants suggest **reliance on volunteer groups** to help after Federal agencies are “out of the picture.”

Q11: (Breakout Question) What are the greatest capacity challenges that local and State governments face in disaster recovery and what are the best practices for increasing that capacity?

- VTC Breakout Groups began this discussion by noting that one (1) in 20 Americans is in a high-density population area. The possibility of resources being wiped out in **high-density population areas** as a result of a disaster should be considered in recovery planning and assessments.
- **Challenges in a high-density population area** disaster while similar to those in more remote areas are likely to be more complex. Challenges noted by participants as examples include:
 - Re-establishing **long-term housing**.
 - Determining **long-term logistics** for the **distribution of goods**.
 - Rebuilding **infrastructure**.
 - Developing **economic recovery strategies** that recognize the lack of interim or long-term **housing** means employees are not available to businesses and economic recovery is slowed.
 - **Massive** debris removal.
- Participants feel that **political events or considerations** that affect the availability of assistance, requiring deployment of limited recovery resources to areas or projects that don't have the highest need puts overall recovery and recovery in highly-impacted and critical areas at risk. One participant noted that deploying resources when thresholds for receiving help are not met, results in others not getting the money they need for recovery.

- Addressing post-disaster needs of **special needs population** can be a challenge. Ditto providing **mental health** and/or “regular” **healthcare**. Participants used flu season as an example, noting the need for more infirmary space, more equipment, more pharmaceuticals and additional staff. They also noted that disasters increase the need for mental health support — services and systems that often have insufficient capacity pre-disaster, exacerbated post-disaster as limited resources have increasing demands.
- Participants want **services available sooner**.
- In each capacity discussion, participants feel it is important to identify needs and **plan** for them.
- When considering the victim assistance perspective, participants noted that **building community capacity results in faster recoveries**. **Reliance on volunteer groups** and **contract support** can fill capacity gaps. Participants said that **identifying**, “**credentialing**” and **managing “spontaneous” volunteers** is important when these resources are viewed as opportunities to increase local capacity, noting the New Jersey State police process as a best practice example.
- Moving to the private sector, participants want to see FEMA’s long-term recovery planning group **identify appropriate FEMA reimbursable contractors**.
- Participants also noted when considering resources and staffing that recovery partners should take advantage of Emergency Volunteer Air Corps (**EVAC**), calling for its expansion.
- Some participants want to see **crisis counseling** and counseling programs under the *Stafford Act* expanded.
- This group feels **streamlining application** processes increases resiliency **if help is given immediately**. “Time lags” hinder capacity building and recovery.

Q 12: (Breakout Question) What are best practices for marshaling Federal assistance both financial and professional support – to support State and local efforts to recover from a disaster, and how can we work together to better leverage existing Federal grant dollars?

- Breakout Group participants began the “**marshaling**” assistance conversation:
 - By acknowledging that **catastrophic events “require” Federal support**.
 - **FEMA does “great” risk and response coordination** but needs to “look beyond risk” to more fully address recovery.
- With regard to “**marshaling**” assistance, participants suggest:
 - Immediate **deployment of Federal support to the Emergency Operations Center**.
 - Acknowledging that recovery efforts need to redirect thinking from *response* to *recovery* and may require **redirecting thinly staffed response providers** and **financial support to recovery activities**. Participants noted that Technical Assistance staff is needed in both response and recovery.

- Greater **consistency** between *Declaration*-identified needs and approved applications for funding support. One participant noted that if a project is approved in good faith, resources should be provided.
- Participants again noted that the full Federal family needs to be “**at the table**” from response through recovery supporting recovery needs from housing through economic recovery.
- When considering how to “**leverage**” assistance, participants suggested:
 - Recovery processes ensure success in meeting applicant needs and implementing approved recovery projects **past deactivation of Federal resources**.
 - **Planners on the ground** help build long-term capacity.
 - A **private-sector focus** is critical to leveraging resources.
- Not specifically “marshaling” or “leveraging comments but expressed during this discussion,”
 - One participant noted again the need for **crisis counseling both during response** and for longer periods to support **long-term recovery** and resources.
 - If a **new Federal program** is created, it needs to be coordinated with existing programs.

Q13: (Breakout Question) What unmet needs are common to most disasters that do not seem to be adequately addressed under the current systems and programs?

- Breakout Group participants expressed the following unmet needs in the response and recovery disaster environment, initially focusing on more **isolated** and **remote** areas. Participants noted:
 - That resources are needed **immediately on site** (suggesting within the first week and at least the first full week’s needs met).
 - All providers **need to expedite delivery** of resources throughout response and recovery.
 - The important role **the U.S. Coast Guard** plays in getting resources to disaster impacted areas, especially to remote areas and down the “island chain.”
- Other unmet needs discussed include:
 - Availability of **affordable** and **transitional housing** immediately post-disaster.
 - Cross-program, cross-partner, cross-agency and cross-organization **training**. Participants especially noted cross training for mitigation is needed to ensure mitigation initiatives are successfully integrated into recovery projects.
 - Participants noted the importance of **training for faith-based** and **nonprofit partners**, including them in all disaster (preparedness, response and recovery) training, and their value in **receiving** and **managing donations**.
- Participants noted that **coordination** and **restoration of communications** and **connectivity** between State and local agencies, authorities, distribution systems and others with recovery resources is key to successful disaster recovery.

Q 14: (Breakout Question) What are best practices for integrating economic and environmental sustainability into recovery?

Breakout Group participants noted the following key points:

- Recovery stakeholders must acknowledge and accept that post-disaster, there will be a “**new normal.**” Participants think the goal of recovery needs to be achieving equivalence or better than the prior state — **improving the pre-disaster “normal”** —and not a replication or return to post-disaster conditions. The footprint does not need to be the same; **development strategies** need to address changing conditions as a result of the disaster. Examples suggested include incorporating **technological upgrades** when rebuilding, and requiring **economic and environmental sustainability strategies** in recovery project planning.
- One participant said that recovery efforts for any individual area **must not lead the national economy into a recession.**
- With regard to the **environment and energy conservation**, participants want to see:
 - An **expansion of funds** for this purpose, citing weatherization, rehab, relocation and retrofit funding as examples. Funds should encourage the use of **sustainable building materials** and be limited to owners that meet environmentally friendly standards.
 - **Incentivized funding and tax breaks** that encourage environmental sustainability.
 - **Environmentally friendly construction standards embedded** in programs all the time (pre- and post-disaster).
 - **Regulatory flexibility** and “**elasticity**” in funding streams so environmentally friendly construction is possible. Participants noted that each disaster is different; each community is different and **one-size does not fit all.**
- One participant also expressed the need for **doing environmentally-friendly building now**, day-in and day-out pre-disaster: *“If we wait until after a disaster to do environmentally-friendly development and construction, we’ve waited too long. . . We need to be doing incentives now.*
- Plans to **restore the population base** must include strategies to ensure **availability of workforce housing** close to where homes were (pre-disaster).
- **Restoration of revenue streams** is critical to recovery. Communities may lose their tax base as well as their business base as the result of a catastrophic disaster, resulting in the community needing more financial assistance. Communities need **greater awareness** of Federal and other programs and a greater integration across programs that offer this type of assistance.
- While noted for their flexibility, recovery funding needs to provide resources **beyond the availability of Block Grants to successfully respond** to unique needs of unique communities. One participant said, *“[It] is disheartening to not be able to offer more . . . than just CDBG funds. . .”*
- Participants want more **regulatory flexibility** to better to address emergency situations.
- And they want a greater universal understanding of the **importance of private-sector partnerships** in restoring community economic health and greater inclusion of those partnerships in recovery planning and decision-making.

- Greater awareness of **existing programs** and more **cross-program conversations at the Federal** level before approaching local agencies is important to this group. Participants noted (again) lack of awareness of existing tax relief programs, SBA low interest loan programs and programs that provide incentives to repair to higher standards, as examples.
- **Money get into the hands of citizens and local governing authorities** so they can start recovery initiatives “as soon as possible” is a recurring theme.
- Participants do not want to see repopulation plans on **areas determined to be TOO vulnerable** to “put back together.”

Q15: (Breakout Question) What are best practices for integrating mitigation and resilience into recovery?

- Breakout Group participants began this discussion by noting:
 - **Early application of Stafford Act 404 and 406** hazard mitigation projects into PA and the response and recovery phase is important.
 - Identification of new mitigation measures should be **ongoing** throughout recovery.
- Best practice examples include:
 - Underground **utilities**.
 - Participants again mentioned identifying **critical facilities** such as EOCs, hospitals, police and banking pre-disaster and developing plans to ensure their continued functioning post-disaster.
 - Integration of **emergency management curriculums** and **mitigation curricula** in professional development courses and academic curricula.
 - One example of a **home protection roofing program** (utilized by 300 families).
 - Removal of two (2) thousand families to **safe housing** outside hazard areas.
 - Preparedness, response and recovery outreach and public education materials produced in **multiple languages**.
 - Development and distribution of **multi-hazard Mitigation Guides** to promote mitigation initiatives and increase public awareness of what’s possible.
 - Providing needed **mitigation** and **resiliency Technical Assistance** professionals to build capacity.
 - **Integration of mitigation** into all Federal agency funding, operational phases (preparedness, response and recovery) and agency outreach.

Q16: (Directed to the Web site) What else would you like us to know?